Brief Commentary on CCBC by Joe Burns

CCBC (Citizens concerned for Better Community) was formed by Joe Burns in 1977 for the express purpose of advocating for an amendment to the Human Rights Ordinance In Allentown, PA. It existed for over a year, the issue being settled for the moment by a ruling fron the city solicitor that Allentown had no right to exceed the State Human Rights Commission in its powers. A push to amend the Ordinance was successful sometime after the year 2000. The silly name of our organization came about in response to to an anti- gay/anti-amendment group called Citizens Organized for Decency, founded by a sociology professor at Muhlenburg College.

While not accomplishing our goal, we had great fun with demonstrations at City Hall, public appearances at City Council meetings and meetings of the Human Rights Commission, along with gay rights rallies. Le Hi Ho, the three local chapters of NOW (Allentown, Lehigh Valley, and Bethlehem NOW orgs), The Rural Gay Caucus were especially strong collaborators in the effort, but others also deserve mention: LEPOCO Lehigh Valley/ Pocono (advocates for Peace and non-violence that is still alive in the Valley), born in the Vietnam anti-war Era), the Socialist Party (perhaps more interested in fomenting dissent than gay rights), and the members and staff of the Human Rights Commission in Allentown. Special mention is due as well of Confront, the drug addiction treatment center that lent support and hosted the meetings of CCBC.

Many CCBC files are available in the collection.

Brief commentary on CCBC by JWB, October2013

C.C.B.C.'s History and Purpose

After the City Council of Allentown refused to consider the amendment (including sexual and/or affectional preference) to the protective clauses of the human relations ordinance, native gay activists saw the need for a strong local gay rights organization (Oct., '77). The City Council obviously was trying to avoid the issue, because the amendment had been introduced in the preceding spring session, and the Council had referred the admendment to the City's Human Relations Council for study. But after the City's Human Relations Council favorably recommended it back to City Council, the Councilpeople and the Mayor refused to even introduce it. The sizable gay constituency (at least 10%) and its supporters in Allentown needed to become aware and active in this struggle. Therefore, with support from members of LE-HI-HO, a previously established gay support organization, the native activists called a meeting on October the 4th, 1977 to organize the local concered citizenry. Since then bi-monthly meetings have been routine.

After establishing its stucture and discussing possible directions for its growth (community services and/or political action), C.C.B.C. planned an event to attract local media coverage. This media zap, called "Guess Who's Coming Out of the Closet", mustered 20 courageous, enthusiastic and fun-loving members to the sidewalks of City Hall to shout, chant, sing and carry picket signs as they marched around and through a symbolic closet door (Dec., '77). Because of the zap, speakers from C.C.B.C. were featured at a Sunday School class, a Jaycees' Wives' meeting and (with an opponent) on a radio talk-program.

At one of the two monthly meetings of C.C.B.C., a guest speaker, program and/or discussion group is featured. The other meeting is the business meeting. Both meetings are open to the entire citizenry of the Lehigh Valley. And to encourage widest participation, monthly pot-luck

over

dinners, radio-atons, gay dances, raffles, a coffee house and film festivals have been proposed, but these ideas have yet to be implemented. Nevertheless, with the continued support of the gay community and its friends, C.C.B.C. should become not only an influential political institution, but a congenial social institution as well.

LGBT History Project
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Documents Online

Title: *Citizens Concerned for a Better Community (CCBC) History* by Joe Burns

Date: October 2013

Location: LGBT-001 Joseph W. Burns Collection

Contact:
LGBT History Project
Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu